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Mediated Communication and Commoditization of the Female Gender: Discourse Analysis Indian News Magazines

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This paper explores gender representation in three English news magazines from India and the social discourse thereby generated. It endeavors a discourse analysis by deconstructing the narrative built by the news magazines. It tries to analyze if gender stereotypes, including sexualisation and commoditization of women, are being perpetuated in the news media by exploring the gender constructs in these news magazines through the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The women characters of these stories can never really break the jinx of 'male gaze' of social narrative. The sub-texts of these stories conform to the hegemonic clutch of patriarchy. Media are instrumental in conveying and portraying gender stereotypes and other patriarchal and hegemonic 'values' about women and femininity. They also conform to culture in depicting of women as sex objects or commodities which are usually young, slim, beautiful, sexy, passive, male-dependent, and often incompetent, dull and dumb. The article looks at all these gendered texts in the light of language, social constructs and frames in order to understand the schemas involved.

Keywords: Gender, hegemony, media frame, discourse analysis, macrostructure

An individual's attempt in maintaining an understanding of the "self" becomes almost impossible given the media's influence and power in shaping the world's perception of the "self". By gradually shaping public opinion, personal beliefs and self perceptions, media influence the process of socialization and shape ideology and thinking. Media dynamics has greatly influenced our socio-political thinking since we are both the creators and consumers of media content. Media selectivity and media framing of gender issues have often been criticized for being lop-sided and the world we live in has indeed become 'mediatized reality.' Keval J. Kumar (2008) is of the opinion that rather than encouraging and stimulating new ideas and modern roles in Society, stereotypical portrayal of women and minorities in India help to reinforce orthodox and ancient thinking.

Our deepest values like good and bad, positive-negative, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality are overtly or covertly influenced by media. Media shows us how to dress, look and consume. Our reactions to members of different social groups are governed by media making us conform to the 'dominant' system of norms, values, practices, and institutions. Here 'domination' refers to conditions under which the subordinated have relatively little room for manoeuvre (Foucault, 1988).

The role of media in developing perceptions has been amply highlighted by Mary Beth (2014). According to her, media have the ability to influence perceptions and behaviours of social groups. Media prime the existing cognitions of out group members and influence the creation, learning, and development processes of the group. One of the most frequently studied theories on stereotype formation and perceptions from the media, is the Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1976). According to this theory, media content can, over a long period of time, lead to distorted perceptions of social reality that reflect patterns frequently featured in the media. The effect is due to the cumulative consumption of media. (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2012). Stereotype formation has also been dealt with by Framing theory which was first prepared by Goffman in his book *Frame Analysis* (1974) which argued that people “locate, perceive, identify and label” events and occurrences. It has been proved that communicative actors, such as news media and state elites have a far reaching role in the general public and are able to convey specific narrative and even ideologies to an audience.

Media and Gender

Gender may be defined as the social construct of biological sex. “The concept of gender as socially constructed has been theorized extensively and illustrated in a variety of arenas from the play ground to the boardroom” (Kessler 1990, Lorber, 1994, & Messner, 2000). Wharton (2005) believed that gender is not something static, but a “system of social practices.” It is as much a process as a fixed state, thereby implying that gender is being continually produced and reproduced. “The media play a big role in constituting this process of gender role acculturation, rather than simply reflecting or representing such differences of gender roles” (Benwell, 2002). According to Del-Teso-Craviotto (2006) “the mass media are central to the formation and continuation of various discourses, including gender ideologies.”

The mass media have often been scrutinized for their traditional and narrow depictions of women and men, which emphasize the differences between what it means to be a woman and a man. The distinction between women and men, based on different psychological traits (women are emotional and sensitive, and men are rational and competent) and physiological characteristics (women are slender and men are muscular), as well as fields of action (for women the household, family and fashion; for men paid work, sports and technology), have been widely criticised by feminist scholars (Döring & Pöschl, 2006).

Stereotypical gender depictions in the mass media also define social expectations and serve to educate the public on what is socially acceptable and what is not. Stereotypes portrayed in the media, therefore, support rigid gender roles, restricting the options for development of women and men. Such traditional gender roles are also limiting, as the roles portrayed are hierarchical and patriarchal, where men are more often presented in a higher position, and women are presented in passive and lowly roles (Döring & Pöschl, 2006).

Gender Stereotypes in News Media

In India, women have long been stereotypically portrayed in roles that reinforce ancient cultural and social values and norms, rather than in roles that stimulate modern rational thinking. Gender construction in the media or the mediation of gender has larger social

and cultural implications. Antonio Gramsci's (1971) concept of 'hegemony' refers to the cultural dominance perpetuated by ruling ideology. The stereotypical patriarchal and hegemonic representation of women in media deeply influences the society in perpetuating those values and thoughts. Dyer (1993) has illustrated that the word 'stereotype' has today become almost a term of abuse.

Language always carries some associations, connotations, or values with it. Roland Barthes' seminal work on the semiotics of photographic images and language addresses the study of meanings of symbols of mass culture, media, advertising and fashion. In his early work he argued that literature like all forms of communication, is essentially a system of signs, as such he argued that it encodes various ideologies or 'myths' to be decoded in terms of its own organizing principles or internal structures. The media, in representing women in this stereotypical manner reproduces patriarchal systems of women being seen as sex objects, mothers and caregivers (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005).

In general, media continues to present both women and men in stereotypical ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Typically, men are portrayed as adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships. Just as consistent with cultural views of gender are depictions of women as sex objects who are usually young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent and often incompetent and dumb. Female characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people. Because media pervade our lives, the way they misinterpret genders may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women.

Framing the News

The major premise of Framing theory is that it is a process by which issues are assigned perspectives and concepts and people accordingly re-orient their thinking about such issues and ideas. Perspectives matter to a great extent while viewing issues. Accordingly issues can have various consideration and implications. "A frame in a communication organizes everyday reality" (Tuchman, 1978). This it does by "providing meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). A Frame also promotes "particular definitions and interpretations of political issues" (Shah et al., 2002). Accordingly, a frame suggests and gives meaning to the controversy and the issue in hand. They give credence to meaningless and non-recognizable events and turn them into discernible events.

Entman (1993) offered a more detailed explanation of how media provide audiences with schemas for interpretation. According to him, "selection and salience" are the essential factors for framing. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation." "The framing and presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events" (Price, Tewsbury, & Powers, 1995).

The theory of Framing has long been used in order to explain how communicative actors, such as news media and state elites, are able to convey a specific narrative to an audience (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007). As Gentry has pointed out "rhetoric has often been used to perpetuate certain social truths and norms." "The world is too full of information to allow everything to be included in just one story or narrative" (Lippmann, 1991). Thus, we constantly use *frames* in order to select and highlight "some facets of

events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2003).

Feminist Media Studies

Feminists have long recognized the significance of the media as a site for the expression of- or challenges to existing constructions of gender. According to the Feminist Majority Foundation (2007), Feminist theories are "methods of creating and organizing knowledge that assume, as points of departure, the socio-cultural construction of gender and the institutionalization of unequal power relations in society." Van Zoonen (1994) states the media have always been at the centre of feminist critique. Furthermore, the media has been thought to act as socialisation agents. Curran and Gurevitch (1991) explain that "experimental research done in the tradition of cognitive psychology tends to support the hypothesis that media act as socialization agents— along with the family— teaching children in particular their appropriate sex roles and symbolically rewarding them for appropriate behavior." It is thought that media perpetuate sex role stereotypes because they reflect dominant social values.

More scholarly analyses, such as those to be found in the 1978 American collection of *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, edited by Gaye Tuchman, applied the quantitative survey methods of mainstream American mass communication research to analyse 'sex-role stereotyping' within media images. Tuchman argued that such images amounted to "symbolic annihilation of women." It was this work on 'images of women' or 'sex role stereotyping' that dominated much early research. "Across media forms ranging from news to advertising, such images, argue the authors, produce woman 'as a commodity— object and as a negative sign in a male-dominated culture'" (Butcher et. al., 1974).

Literature Review

In *Media and Social Life* edited by Mary Beth (2014), the role of media in developing perceptions has been amply highlighted. "In addition to priming existing cognitions of out group members, media exposure is also thought to have the ability to influence the creation, learning, and/or development of perceptions and behaviours associated with social group membership."

The Cultivation theory—one of the most frequently studied theories on stereotype formation and perceptions from the media points out long term exposure by means of cumulative consumption of media content, can lead to distorted or 'different' perceptions of social reality that mirrors the patterns of portrayals frequently featured in the media. (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2012). This hypothesis has received support in a variety of contexts, including the role of media in cultivating perceptions of African-Americans as criminals (Oliver & Armstrong, 1998).

Paul Hodkinson (2011) writes in *Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction*, "the world we see is the world that the media portrays." In this context, gender as a 'system of social practices' then becomes something the media 'does' than what it actually 'is'. In sports too, women have been sexualized and portrayed as pretty sex-objects. Their strength, power and skill are undermined and not adequately highlighted (Govende, 2010).

Patowary (2014) has shown that in newspapers, social issues related to women got less than nine per cent coverage while sensational stories relating to women got between fifty-two to sixty-three per cent. Dervin (1987), in the book *Women and Media: Challenging Discourser*, edited by Kiran Prasad mentions: "The essential mandate of all feminist

communication research is to ‘invent approaches’ to allow us to hear the meanings of women in their own terms, including their observations of the structures that constrain them.”

In *The Psychology of Woman*, Margaret W. Matlin (1987) has highlighted seven stereotypical representations that are adopted by the media which target women. Hundreds of studies have been conducted in the representation of women in the media. From the resource we can draw the conclusion that there are seven stereotypes that target women. These are: (i) women are relatively invisible, (ii) women are relatively inaudible, (iii) although most women are employed they are seldom shown working outside the home, (iv) women are shown doing household work, (v) women and men are represented differently, (vi) women’s bodies are used differently from men’s bodies in advertisements, (vii) women of colour – when they are shown at all – are often represented in a particularly biased way.

In her paper, *The Influence Of Media on views of Gender*, Julia T. Wood of Department of Communication of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, writes about media being the most persuasive influence on how we view men and women. Three themes describe how media represent gender. First, women are under-represented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional role and normalize violence against women.

In her book, *Language and Woman’s Place*, Lakoff (1975) proposed what she called ‘women’s language’; that is, a use of language that is different from ‘men’s language’ or rather what she termed as ‘neutral language.’ This language includes features such as use of polite forms, the use of question tags, rising intonations in declaratives, the avoidance of expletives, a greater use of diminutives and euphemism, the use of more hedges and mitigating devices, more indirectness and the use of particular vocabulary items such as ‘adorable’, ‘charming’ and ‘sweet.’ This use of language, she argued, made women’s language tentative and coupled with the use of demeaning and trivializing terms for women, works to keep women in their place in society. These differences, she argued, were the result of, and reinforced, men’s dominance over women.

Objectives

Based on the previous findings, attempt has been made in this study to explore the representation of gender in the print media and to evaluate the discursive practices formulating gender discourse in Indian print media.

Methodology

This paper has considered stories on women published in three major English news magazines of India and critical discourse analysis was chosen as a method of analyzing these stories. The researchers analyzed and evaluated how print media in India have indulged in gender-stereotyping as provided by media framing. For this study, three news stories published in *The Outlook*, *The Week* and *India Today* served as the primary units for evaluation out of the twelve issues of each magazine that had been randomly chosen over a period of one year (July 2015 to June 2016). All the women related stories were initially coded and assessed according to the requirement of the research work. The paper tries to interpret whether proper frames have been used to place an issue in context along with its

implied meaning. Accordingly, the choice of words and phrases were looked into to find out the implied meaning and interpretations and ambiguity, if any.

In the present study, method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been employed to understand the meaning of gender texts. CDA is a method of analyzing the way in which individuals and institutions use language (Richardson, 2007). Norman Fairclough (1995) provides three dimensional analyses to the discursive events: text, discursive practice (language and thought) and social practice. Fairclough (1995) views CDA as “the method to analyze relations between concrete language use and socio-cultural structures.” The framework for the discourse as proposed by Teun Van Dijk (1988) refers not only to textual and structural level of media discourse but at the production and reception level for analysis and explanations. Structural analysis also refers to the analysis of structures at the various levels but higher level properties as coherence, over-all themes and topics of new stories and the whole schematic forms and rhetorical dimensions of text. Teun van Dijk (ibid) recommended the analysis of both micro structure and macro structure.

Macro structure of each gender story was analysed which included analysis of overall meaning from combining the propositions, language used and narratives to understand the multi-function of gender texts. Discourse position of a news story can be determined through the ideological position of the producer. Ideological work of gender discourse can be understood from how the gender word is presented, what gender identities are constructed, what relationship is built up among the women and what stereotypes are perpetuated. The researchers also looked into Teun van Dijk's (2006) conceptual tool *the ideological square*, which is present in language uses of a text. Van Dijk uses this “conceptual tool to determine the referential strategies to see the representation of the world with the help of the text.” He uses two referential tools: positive self-presentation and negative-other representation. Here the **researchers employ** conceptual tool to see the presentation of the gender world and tried to understand the complexities of gender discourse which includes analyses of macro structure and argumentation. The study also looked into how the themes takes turns in the schematic structure.

Analysis

For Critical Discourse Analysis, the language used in the story needs to be dissected and categorized as per the syntax and semantics. The protagonist of each news story has been defined as actor in accordance with the practice of CDA. News items are defined as story here and the reporters/correspondents of the news items are defined as authors. News stories which show representation of the gender within political, economic, social, health and violence parameters have been taken. ‘T’ stands for themes in the Turntaking column.

‘Anaphoric’ reference is one in which a word or phrase is referred or used earlier in a text and ‘Cataphoric’ reference describes an item which refers forward to another word or phrase which is later in the text.” (Paltridge, 2006). As the analysis is of women representation and discourse, the stories have been chosen accordingly. The analysis of text is randomly chosen (one in every four issues) of Outlook, The Week and India Today News magazines. In this paper, three issues, one of each news magazine has been taken.

CDA of *That Lotus Pond Muck on Mt. Sinai*

(Discourse plane: *The Outlook*, March 21, 2016, p. 52, Section: Dirty Laundry, Author: Saptashri Roy)

This story is a voyeuristic public dirty-linen washing of Salman Rushdie and his wife Padma Lakshmi, hence the title “That Lotus Pond Muck on Mt. Sinai” (for Padma

Lakshmi and the dirty divorce, respectively). Padma's book "Love, Loss and What We Ate" gives us details of the 'randy, callous and envy-filled geriatric' while Rushdie calls her a 'narcissist'. It is a story of love gone sour between two high profile personalities, each with their own insecurities. What eventually emerges is that behind the limelight the high-profile lives are not so rosy as imagined by the general public. As per the syntax and semantics analysis, the key words and phrases used in the story of "That Lotus Pond Muck on Mt. Sinai" can be put under following categories.

Adjectives: tempestuous marriage, husbandly advances, vanilla-scented, envious, mercurial, ambitious, insecure, naïve, bold ambitions, brazen beauty, dunderheaded, fame-hungry. *Epithets:* 'bad investment', significant other, nymphet, millenarian illusion. *Collocation:* literary-modeling-culinary couple. *Hyperbole:* dazzling appendage on his arm, majestic narcissism, figment of imagination, quite the stir. *Idioms:* 'peeled back the layers' 'soap –operatic musings'

Anaphoric/Cataphoric References

"Padma Lakshmi, the model, food writer and host of the US TV show Top Chef, has had her latest memoirs published this week, causing 'quite the stir' as she 'peeled back the layers' and 'lifted the lid' on her tempestuous marriage to Salman Rushdie, the author and Nobel laureate from 2004-07."

This is anaphoric reference to how Padma has chosen to use the poison ink in her revenge memoir in which she has done some serious dirty-linen washing of Rushdie. The first few lines try to establish her as a woman who is more than just Rushdie's wife. It describes her as a "model, food writer and host of US TV show" in an attempt to raise her credentials. She is causing quite a stir as she seems to strike with vengeance in 'lifting the lid' and 'peeling back the layers' as if she is unearthing some terrible secret.

- "According to her, he needed constant attention and mothering – as well as sex. But before wives the world over ask what exactly her beef is, considering the husbands behave in exactly the same way, Rushdie's reputation takes a somewhat more considerable battering when she says he callously ignored a medical condition that made sex agonizing for her."

Lakshmi is referring to the torture she had to endure from Rushdie who needed "constant attention and mothering." Here the author tries to rationalize by saying that that's what every man wants from a women. However her pain is more than that when she says that he would physically abuse and demand sex even when she was suffering from a medical condition which made sex agonizing for her. This shows the callousness of Rushdie.

- "Rushdie once became so enraged by her rejection of his husbandly advances that he denounced her as a 'bad investment.'"

This refers to how women have been thought as 'an investment' wherein she has to perform all her 'wifely duties' in exchange of living with her husband. Rushdie allegedly called Lakshmi 'bad investment' when she rejected his advances for sex.

- "She managed to overcome her initial awe at hanging around with his highbrow friends, literary giants like Susan Sontag and Don DeLillo, by preparing sumptuous meals for them."

Lakshmi admits that she was in total awe of his high-profile literary friends and in order to overcome the awkwardness would prepare elaborate meals for them. This is very natural for a woman who has never been in illustrious company and feels insecure.

- “At parties, people would breathlessly ask what it was like to live with a man so brilliant. It was blissful, she writes. But bliss is usually short lived.”

This refers to her short-lived marriage with Salman Rushdie in which she was ‘blissful’. Other people who were in awe of Salman’s brilliance would enquire how it felt to live with him. However, she has admitted that the bliss didn’t last long enough.

- She talks in detail about her sexual experimentation on the modeling circuit in her youth saying: ‘I acted out my curiosities and fantasies,’ including at least one Lesbian encounter. ‘Some I regret, but not all, but not all, like knowing what it is to touch and to be touched by a woman.’

She is bold enough to talk about her ‘sexual experimentation’ which included a lesbian encounter. This gives an insight on her life in the modeling circuit.

- “.....on a no-way pretentious flourish he personifies Padma as a dunderheaded, fame-hungry, nymphet with bold ambitions to match her brazen beauty.”

This refers to Rushdie’s description of her character. The towering literary figure that he is, he sees her as a ‘dunderhead’ who has clung to him for his fame and wanted to take advantage of him in order to live her own ambitions. He is implying that she used him in order to get ahead in life.

- “He referred to her as the ‘millenarian illusion’ after meeting her in 1999, and portrayed her as insecure and naïve.” But he openly admitted that he was bewitched by her looks. ‘If I ever meet this girl my goose is cooked,’ he recalled.

Rushdie refers to her as the ‘millenarian illusion’ something which does not last for long because he first met her at 1999 end. He had known that she was insecure and naïve and had fallen in love with her instantly. According to him, he was totally ‘bewitched’ by her looks.

- “Rushdie also detailed Padma’s rather soap-operatic musings when they first spent the night together in a hotel. ‘There’s a bad inside me and when she comes out she takes over whatever she wants.’”

Rushdie is referring to Lakshmi’s melodrama when he is spending his first night with her in a hotel. She is of course being naïve or maybe she is just trying to impress him by saying that there’s another woman inside her who takes whatever she wants. Perhaps she was referring to Rushdie who was still married at that time.

- “She was capable of saying things of such majestic narcissisms that I didn’t know whether to bury my head in my hands or applaud,” says Rushdie”

He is referring to her bloated sense of self-importance that she probably had. Of course she was young and proud of her beauty.

- “And with him describing her photo shoots as her having sex with hundreds of men at the same time and they don’t even get to touch her, there’s no way an actual man can compete with that.”

This is Rushdie’s feelings when he sees her photo-shoots. Perhaps there is a sense of jealousy or insecurity when he sees his young wife being lusted by so many men. His own literary brilliance notwithstanding, he was an envious geriatric balding author.

- “They love women as a figment of their imagination; vanilla scented and stress-free. They are there to listen to and nourish them. This figment doesn’t have problems or goals of their own. She doesn’t bleed or cry or complain. She is merely as accessory to his life; an extra in his film. And – here’s a sentence I never thought I’d write – we have all dated a Salman Rushdie. A man who showers you with attention at the beginning – a man who makes an art of courtship when you’re nothing but a dazzling appendage on his arm, but seemingly loses interest when it isn’t all about them.”

This is what a female columnist in the *Daily Telegraph* had to say about older man-younger women relationships. According to her, it is doomed to die, since the man had fallen in love not with her real self but with an ‘illusion’ where she is perfect and almost un-human in her existence – where she doesn’t bleed or cry or complain. She becomes just an arm-candy, an accessory, for him and he soon enough loses interest in her. She is just a mindless dazzling appendage, becomes just an arm-candy, an accessory, for him and he soon enough loses interest in her. She is just a mindless dazzling appendage.

Macrostructure

Turntaking	Argumentation
T: “The air hangs heavy with a spoor of betrayal and regret, and we wonder just what juicy and intensely personal bullets of warfare will be unleashed as the spat gets dirtier and nastier.”	Claim: Padma Lakshmi, has "had her memoirs published causing quite the stir as she peeled back the layers and lifted the lid on her tempestuous marriage to Salman Rushdie."
T: “He needed constant mothering - as well as sex.”	Claim: She was suffering from a medical condition that made sex agonizing for her.
T: “Rushdie once became so enraged by her rejection of his husbandly advances that he denounced her as a bad investment.”	Claim: "Rushdie left the next day, she says for a trip, simply saying, 'the show must go on.'"
T: “Padma went straight to a divorce lawyer the first time she felt well enough to leave her house.” “It was all a sad end to their romantic beginnings,” she writes.	

<p>T: She manages to “overcome her initial awe at hanging around with his highbrow friends, literary giants, like Susan Sontag and Don DeLillo, by preparing sumptuous meals for them.”</p> <p>T: “Things changed, she said when her own career started to knock at the door of his.”</p> <p>T: “Memoirs are after all, inherently a subjective affair. They give a glimpse of a relationship, but is it any more than a glimpse.”</p> <p>T: “In a no-way-pretentious flourish, he personifies Padma as a dunderheaded, fame-hungry nymphet with bold ambitions to match her brazen beauty”</p> <p>T: A female columnist had this to say about older man-younger women relationship: “They love women as a figment of their imagination; vanilla scented and stress-free. They are there to listen to and nourish them. This figment doesn’t have problems or goals of their own. She doesn’t bleed or cry or complain. She is merely as accessory to his life; an extra in his film.”</p>	<p>Claim: She is frequently asked how it feels to be living with a man so brilliant.</p> <p>Claim: "She had already appeared in two shows on the Food Network."</p> <p>Claim: "While Rushdie has yet not responded to the claims that he is a thoughtless and randy old goat, Padma herself does not shy away from her own shortcomings."</p> <p>Claim: We have all dated a Salman Rushdie. A man who showers you with attention at the beginning - a man who makes an art of courtship when you're nothing but a dazzling appendage on his arm, but seemingly loses interest when it isn't all about them.</p>
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Discoursal Nature of the Story

This story attempts to narrate dirty-linen washing of a marriage in public that has gone sour of two high-profile personalities—Salman Rushdie and Padma Lakshmi. Although the memoirs are subjective it gives us glimpses of the marriage that was doomed from the beginning. She was looking for fame and he was looking for an arm-candy. The Forensic rhetoric arguments that each gives for leaving the other shatters the myth of the perfect match of ‘beauty and brains.’ The story is filled with superfluous rhetorical tropes like hyperboles which make it a piece of sensationalism. The discursive practices of this story are the failings of a marriage which is superficial and panders to the deep insecurities of the two parties. The ideological square is negative representation of marriage and trivialization of the institution of marriage.

All the adjectives used for the woman: *‘vanilla-scented, envious, mercurial, ambitious, insecure, naïve, bold ambitions, brazen beauty, dunderheaded, fame-hungry’* provide a very negative image and portray her as someone who is beautiful but is a fool and is hungry for fame. She is also called a *millenarian illusion* – that she has put up a hoax and is unattainable.

CDA of *Charm of Un-Ageing Intellect*

(Discourse plane: *The Week*, August 30, 2015, p. 50, Section: DeTour, Author: Shobhaa De)

As the title implies, Shobhaa De has highlighted the unending charm of intellect over physical beauty. Her idol is Hollywood superstar Sharon Stone whom she met in 2014 when she had come to Mumbai for fund-raising for AIDs sufferers. A modern day “goddess” Sharon charms with her brains as much as she does with her body. She has a staggering IQ and an innate intelligence that cannot be erased with the vagaries of age. Sharon is 57 but confesses that 57 is the new 27. In this sprightly write-up Shobhaa De has opined that the charm and attractiveness of women need not depend on bodies and beauty. Because bodies age, the brain doesn’t have to. The brain of a woman is still the most irresistible asset, while the rest is a ‘delectable bonus.’ As per the analysis of syntax and semantics, the key words and phrases used in the story of “Charm of Un-Ageing Intellect”, can be put under following categories.

Adjectival: incredible, staggering, amazing, abrasively, over-enthusiastic, goofy, blinding, witty, persuasive, flirty, daring, unstoppable, starry-eyed, uber revealing, fawning, poise , grace, toned and terrific, irresistible, delectable, challenging. *Naming reference*: fan-girl, incredible Sharon. *Colloquialism*: hot bod. *Hyperbole*: living deity, modern-day goddess, million bucks, blinding charisma. *Idioms*: scorched the red carpet, blinding light that makes her incandescent

Anaphoric/Cataphoric References

- “Let’s start with a confession: I have been Sharon Stone’s fan-girl from the moment I watched Basic Instinct. I cannot think of any contemporary star who could have pulled off the much-dissected ‘leg crossing’ scene with as much panache. Yes, Sharon is a modern-day Goddess. She has a staggering IQ (documented) and she uses her brains, as much as she flashes her amazing body.”
- “Sharon is blessed with an inner light that makes her incandescent. No matter what her age or circumstances.”

There is reverence in which hyperboles have been used to describe her beauty. The author believes that Sharon’s intellect and beauty is some kind of inner light which shines through her and makes her glow in incandescence. And such incandescence which radiates from inside cannot be diminished with age.

- “The power of Sharon’s blinding charisma came through that evening, as she worked a hard-boiled well-heeled crowd of millionaires and billionaires. Witty, persuasive, flirty, daring, Sharon was unstoppable.”

Here the passage tries to highlight her powerful charisma as she hosts the AIDS fundraiser in Mumbai. As she moves around the rich and powerful hoi-polloi of Mumbai society, she is in her best elements. She is witty, persuasive, flirty, daring. She is a woman who knows what she wants and will go to any extent to get it. She is totally unstoppable.

- “About the post-stroke Sharon who says she is aware her body type has changed after the surgery, as have her food allergies, I am sure she knows what she is talking about. Sharon insists she has ‘brain damage’ which has led her being ‘rude’ to people. Er— sounds like an alibi! Fortunately, I wasn’t at the receiving end of her rudeness on the two occasions we met.”

The author presupposes that Sharon is using her post-stroke excuse for being rude although she herself hasn't witnessed it. After the stroke in 2001, Sharon had said that it felt like her entire DNA had changed and her brain wasn't sitting where it used to be. She admits it has made her more emotionally intelligent, stronger and more abrasive while dealing with people. Perhaps all these are her tactics to deal with obtrusive people who want to get too close to her. These could be defense mechanism of celebrities to keep unwanted elements at bay. For whatever reason, Sharon comes out as a smart, witty person who is in total control and can take good care of herself according to De.

- "I watched her dealing with hundreds of fawning admirers with poise, grace and humour. Those who have seen the Harper's Bazaar photo shoot confirm that Sharon's 'hot bod' remains as toned and terrific as before. For me, it was never about the famous body – it was always the challenging expression of her ice-blue eyes."

A woman's beauty can be total only when she is intellectually stimulating and can handle herself confidently with poise and grace when faced with fawning admirers. Stone is one of those women who despite having a beautiful body were never about a beautiful body alone. Many years ago she had posed in the raw for Harper's Bazaar. But those who see her today as a 57 year old vouch that the well-toned body remained the same as it was during the Harper's Bazaar shoot. However as the author emphasizes, it was never about the famous beautiful body. Sharon Stone has become legendary because of the grit and determination that shows in her eyes. Because she has chosen to live as she has wanted to and has absolutely no regrets in life.

- "Bodies age. The brain doesn't have to. No matter what Sharon says about hers having changed after the stroke; her brain is still her most irresistible asset. The rest is a delectable bonus."

The bottom-line of the narrative is that beauty and bodies face the brunt of time and will eventually age no matter how gorgeous and beautiful they once were. But the brain and the intellect stands the onslaught of time and can remain as young as ever. The brain, thoughts, intellect remain the most precious and irresistible asset of any human being. And if that someone happens to have a great body and a beautiful face, it is an added delectable bonus. Brains, the author tries to show, have more value than beauty because while the latter fades with time the former need not.

Macrostructure

Turntaking	Argumentation
T: 'A Sharon Stone fan girl from the moment I watched Basic Instinct'	Claim: "I cannot think of any contemporary actor who could have pulled off that much-dissected leg-crossing scene with as much panache."
T: She has a staggering IQ (documented) and she uses her brains as much as she flashes her amazing body.	
T: Sharon had suffered a brain aneurysm in 2001, which led to a stroke. 'I became emotionally intelligent. Now I am stronger and I can be abrasively direct. That scares people....'	
	Claim: According to the author: 'Sharon insists she has 'brain damage' which has led to her being 'rude' to people!

T: Sharon 'worked' a hard-boiled, well-heeled crowd of millionaires and billionaires.... Witty, persuasive, flirty, daring...Sharon was unstoppable.	Claim: Sharon had confessed 57 is the new 27.
T: 'For me, it was never about the famous body - it was always the challenging expression in her ice-blue eyes.'	Claim: Bodies age. The brain need not.
T: Her brain is still her most irresistible asset.	Claim: 'The rest is a delectable bonus'.

Discoursal Nature of the Story

This column has been written by author, former model and socialite Sobhaa De who has her fair share of glamour. The title “*Charm of Un-Ageing Intellect*” is self-explanatory. Here De is in total awe of Sharon Stone and by her own confession has been Stone’s ‘fan-girl’, from the moment she watched *Basic Instinct*, a Hollywood super hit. She has used superlative hyperboles like “*living deity*” and “*Modern-day Goddess*” to describe Sharon.

Sharon has a ‘*hot bod*’ which remains as toned and terrific as before. However, what really impresses the author is her ‘staggering IQ’ and her brain that she uses as much as she flashes her body. That the author has to justify the ‘brain’ and ‘beauty’ binary to show that the general perception is that they are mutually exclusive as far as a female is concerned. De reacts as if it’s a rare commodity for a woman of beauty to have intellect as well. Hence, she employs the repeated justification for Sharon having both.

The ideological square of this piece is that a woman’s intelligence has more ‘value’ than her beauty which ultimately fades away. It also tries to prove the ideological point that a woman of beauty can also have intellect. Shobhaa De ‘behaves as an over-enthusiastic puppy in the presence of the super star.’ This self-confessional statement shows the composite power that beauty and brains can bring. De, also a beauty with brains perhaps is trying to identify with her. For her ‘it was never about the famous body – it was about the intellect and daring – It was always the challenging expression in her ice-blue eyes.’

Sharon who had come to India on a Fundraising mission used her ‘prowess’ that stems from a lethal combination of beauty and brains to get what she wanted. According to the author, ‘The power of Sharon’s blinding charisma came through that evening, as she worked a hard-boiled, well-heeled crowd of millionaires and billionaires. Witty, persuasive, flirty, daring, Sharon was unstoppable.’ This alludes to the power beautiful women yields in a society and gives a view of the sexuality and power discourse that runs in our society and how beauty can be used to make gains.

The positive representation is that the author has placed the value of brains above beauty, as according to her: ‘Bodies age. The brain doesn’t have to.... her brain is still her most irresistible asset. The rest is a delectable bonus.’ Sharon Stone is referred to as ‘*Hot Bod*’. This word objectifies a woman. An attractive male actor wouldn’t have been called a ‘*hot bod*.’ This again reinforces the stereotypical plane in which a woman is judged. Sharon’s body is referred to as ‘a delectable bonus.’ The word delectable means something delicious, enjoyable and tasty. Here again, the woman’s body is thought to be something ‘consumable’ – like a tasty morsel. This is a stereotypical representation of a woman in which she is supposed to be enjoyed.

CDA of *Who's that Girl?*

(Discourse plane: *India Today*, September 21, 2015, p. 58, Section Cinema, Author: Suhani Singh)

This news story is about a “new crop of spunky actresses who won’t confine themselves to the run-of-the-mill cinema and yet avoid getting the ‘Indie Specialist’ tag.” They are taking ‘Bollywood by storm.’ Radhika Apte, Richa Chadha, Sweta Tripathi and Nimrat Kaur experiment with new genres of films and have earned accolades in the process. The common factor among them is they come from a non-filmy background and don’t carry the baggage of a filmy lineage. They come out as assured and confident young women who “aren’t eager to conform to the film industry’s trope.” They try to find a niche in the competitive industry by sheer hard work and fortitude. The year 2015 saw the successful journey of these ‘other heroines’ who aren’t “merely a prop to the hero but have a mind of their own.” These new breed of girls are seen to be the successors of Shabana Azmi, Dipti Naval and Smita Patil of the 80s. They don’t have an ‘image to pander’ and neither craves for one. As per the analysis of syntax and semantics, the key words and phrases used in the story of “Who’s that Girl”, can be put under following categories.

Adjectival: cautious, optimism, much-welcomed rarity, assured young women, wafer-thin personalities, independent, new-age heroines, commercial, arty, deglamorised, sexy.
Hyperbole: consumed with grief and guilt.

Epithet: much-welcomed rarity, other-heroine, dolled-up characters with wafer-thin personalities, new-age heroine. *Metaphor*: arm-candy to a superstar. *Idioms*: Unchangeable rules of the game, consumed with grief.

Anaphoric/Cataphoric References

- “Apte, 30, is a much-welcomed rarity in Bollywood, an assured young woman who isn’t eager to conform to the film industry’s tropes – that she can find room in a competitive field is a sign of how filmmakers and audiences are becoming receptive to actresses who aren’t afraid to experiment and play complex parts.”
- “The year 2015 has already seen the successful journey of what one may call the ‘other heroine.’ She isn’t merely a prop to the hero but a woman with a mind of her own.”
- “This new crop of actresses doesn’t want to be seen in cookie-cutter sequels or become dolled-up characters with wafer-thin personalities. Instead of appearances they want their performance to take precedence.”

The above anaphoric references are made for those actresses who have adopted non-conformity in their definition of the ‘convention heroine.’ They think and act out of the box and are not afraid to experiment with new forms of cinema. They have a mind of their own and play complex parts that bring forth new ideas. They are from a liberal society and refuse to become ‘arm-candies’ of the heroes.

- “My screen time never bothered me. You will be remembered for your characters because that means you have done justice to them.”

This refers to the actresses who want to do meaningful roles and the time on the screen was never an issue for them. It means they are comfortable doing character roles as long as they give a good performance.

- “The new-age actresses are spunky too. Chandha posted a picture on Twitter showing a middle finger to her detractors. ‘It is my response to people who tell you not to stand by a certain kind of cinema because it is too niche, low budget or doesn’t have songs-dances.’”

These young girls have the spunk to show the ‘middle finger’ to their detractors who want them to play safe and not get stereotyped. They are courageous as they take chances and are not afraid to fail as long as they follow their minds. This shows their strong will and character.

- “We really suffer in this industry because we have too many tags for too many things... We are commercial, arty, deglamorised, sexy....even before you meet someone, already there are so many filters.....I have never had an image, I do not crave for one and I hope that I don’t get one.”

These unconventional actresses are not readily comfortable in this film industry because they have to face many stereotypical assumptions. They get branded as commercial, arty, deglamorised and are bracketed into conventional slots even before they meet someone. They are like square pegs in round holes. However, they are clear about one thing: they never crave to build a certain kind of image. They easily change roles and are not hindered or burdened by a image of their own making. They are open to ideas and love to experiment with different genres of films. This is what makes them special.

- “Fitting into the industry means adhering to certain unchangeable rules of the game. Walking on the runway for fashion designers and attending parties is as important as heading to international film festival.....I was of the belief that my talent will speak for itself but this industry is also about appearances.”

Though the girls are confident about their capabilities and like to take up different genres of films, they also share their insecurities. They have realized that talent is not the all in Bollywood... they have to keep up appearances as well. Packaging, it seems, is important after all. They have to be seen at the right places and look impeccable too if they want a place in the industry. This is the message that the above extract gives.

Macrostructure

Turntaking	Argumentation
T: "Who's that girl?" It's the new breed of actresses who don't conform to the conventional definition of an actress.' T: Radhika Apte's sudden new found stardom. T: The emergence of the 'other heroine' who is not merely a hero's prop.	Claim: Apte has 4 hit releases in 2015- all in non-conventional roles.
T: 'They don't want to be seen in 'cookie-cutters sequels'. They want their performance to take precedence; want to be remembered for their characters.'	Claim: Much like their predecessors of the 1980s like Shabana Azmi, Dipti Naval and Smita Patil.
T: 'They are spunky and unafraid. They are against the norm to stand for a certain kind of cinema. Not satisfied to be merely an arm-candy.'	Claim: Richa Chaddha has shown the middle finger to her detractors in Twitter.

<p>T: 'They also suffer because of too many tags for too many things. They get stereotyped as commercial, arty, deglamorised, sexy. But they don't want a stereotypical image. Don't want to be pigeonholed into any one character.'</p> <p>T: Film makers are now more willing to take feature actresses in mainstream projects. This is Proof of the changing ways of Hindi cinema.</p> <p>T: Because of lack of filmy connection and Godfathers in Bollywood, patience and resilience is important to these girls.</p> <p>T: However, there are certain rules in the industry which they can't change. Appearance matter as much as talent.</p> <p>T: 'Success however is fleeting. These girls acknowledge the struggle ahead of them. First to get parts and the struggle not to be type cast. They all yearn for stability.'</p>	<p>Claim: Puja Bhatt's Cabaret, Sudhir Mishra's Tia aur Tia etc have feature actresses.</p> <p>Claim: Tripathi learnt to do their make-up in the car while travelling.</p> <p>Claim: Appearance matter as much as talent.</p> <p>Claim: They all yearn for stability.</p>
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Discoursal Nature of the Story

The discoursal nature of this story is about the brave young un-conventional actresses who are not afraid to take character roles and move away from the world of glamour to listen to their heart. The story is a welcome and positive stance of the new breed of bold and beautiful actresses who refuse to be dictated into stereotypical roles. These modern Indian girls are breaking moulds and refusing to become mere ‘props’ to the hero. They have been called a ‘much welcomed rarity in Bollywood.’ The narrative is also suggestive of the changing social thoughts in which the filmmakers and the audience have become more open to actresses who are ready to experiment with complex roles. This is a shift from the earlier expectations from Indian actresses who were seen with ‘wafer-thin personalities.’ Something new is happening in the world of cinema where commercial and independent films converge together and the two domains overlap each other. The message is clear– even for the top actresses like Deepika Padukone and Anuska Sharma, just being an “arm candy to a super hero” will not take them places. There is a whole milieu of stories where the actresses can take their calling and not get into pigeon-holed acting and roles. As Apte says, “I have never had an image and I hope I do not get one.”

However, the girls admit that it is difficult to get the roles they want, pointing to the fact that although they have marched ahead, Bollywood is not too eager to give them a free hand. Appearances still do matter in the industry and they have to be seen as a physical entity along with their talent. Sentence like ‘*Arm-candy to a superstar*’ reinforces the underlying stereotypical image of a beautiful girl in which she is often imaged to be clinging to the arm of a man; a mere prop in his existence.

Discussion

The stories discussed in the paper give us an insight into the world of gender-stereotyping as provided by media framing. On the surface, all the stories were stories of women empowerment, where women have chosen to be unconventional in a way and through their innate talents like hard work, charm, and charisma have made a niche for themselves in the world of modeling, fashion and cinema. However, if we scratch a little deeper, we not only find trivialization of the women but the uses of words like *steaming hot*, *uber-revealing*, *hot-bod*, *toned and terrific*, *flirty*, *arm candy to superstar*, *dolled-up characters with wafer-thin personalities*, *It-girl*, *scorching the ramps* cultivate a picture of women being little more than 'items' or 'commodity'. Bodily parts have been described which is stereotypically 'objectification' of women.

The apparent story of courage and grit that these women have exemplified also contains hidden 'gender' sub-texts. In the first story, adjectives used for Padma Laxmi, are: *'vanilla-scented, envious, mercurial, ambitious, insecure, naïve, bold ambitions, brazen beauty, dunderheaded, fame-hungry'*. This provides a very negative image and portrays her as someone who is beautiful but is a fool and is hungry for fame. She is also called a *millenarian illusion* – something not real, or exists only in the fantasies of men.

In the second story, Sharon Stone, though blessed with both beauty and brains, the author has to repeatedly drive home the notion that 'brains and beauty' can co-exist in a woman and that they are not mutually exclusive. The author De had to repeatedly force this binary in the narrative. In the third story, the un-conventional neo actresses who want to take up character roles and don't have an image to pander to, however admit that they don't have many takers in a world where appearances still do matter in the industry and they have to be seen as a physical entity along with their talent. Sentence like *'Arm-candy to a superstar'* reinforce the underlying stereotypical image of a beautiful girl.

Conclusion

The narrative of women by and large represented in Indian news magazines follow a stereotypical manner and a linear trajectory even when they have become achievers and have succeeded in their profession. The magazines follow a typical Western White feminist interpretation of third world women of suffering, either sexually constrained and requiring sexual salvation or tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented or victimized (Mohanty, 1991, 2012). The news magazines suffer the responsibility of reminding the third world women that they have as a social group the responsibility to conform to the societal expectations and succumb to 'hegemony'. The derivative of each story is that each successful woman has to fit a particular pattern as laid out by the dominant paradigm of feminist ideology. The discourse and discursive pattern formulated by these news magazines clearly establishes that no matter how successful a woman is, she has to be stereotypically portrayed in the media, in which her physical attributes should take precedence over her talents as she is sexually constrained (ibid). These magazines represent woman in such a way that the idea of woman which is a political and ideological construct is subjugated to the stories of successful women as if she is outside the political and social sphere. She would get visually represented in a glamourised way.

The work is by nature a micro study and has attempted a CDA which in itself a subjective technique. Having chosen a subjective method of study, the researcher does not claim to generalize the findings. Yet at the same time, a larger sample size would have been able to establish the pattern of representation of women in Indian news magazines more firmly.

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